



# Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



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Director of Planning

## **NOTICE OF PREPARATION**

**PROJECT TITLE:** County Project No. 03-254 "Meadow Peak Project"  
Vesting Tentative Tract Map 47760  
General Plan Amendment No. 03-254  
Local Plan Amendment No. 03-254  
Oak Tree Permit No. 03-254  
Conditional Use Permit No. 03-254  
Zone Change No. 03-254

**CEQA LEAD AGENCY:** County of Los Angeles  
Department of Regional Planning  
Impact Analysis Section  
320 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**PROJECT APPLICANT(s):** Santa Clarita Investors, LLC  
McMillin Management Services, L.P.  
2727 Hoover Avenue  
National City, CA 91950

The County of Los Angeles will be the lead agency and will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project identified above. In compliance with Section 15082 of the CEQA *Guidelines*, the County of Los Angeles is sending this Notice of Preparation to responsible agencies, interested parties and federal agencies which may be involved in approving or permitting the project, and to trustee agencies responsible for natural resources affected by the project. Within 30 days after receiving the Notice of Preparation, each agency shall provide the County of Los Angeles with specific details about the scope and content of the environmental information to be contained in the EIR related to that agency's area of statutory responsibility.

The purpose of this Notice of Preparation is to solicit the views of your agency as to the scope and content of the environmental information germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency may need to use the EIR prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

### **Project Location and Environmental Setting**

The project is located in the upper reaches of Haskell Canyon in unincorporated Los Angeles County in the Bouquet Canyon area north of the Santa Clarita Valley. Access to the site is currently provided from Copper Hill Drive via an unpaved road located within the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) fee ownership and Haskell Canyon Wash. This access will not be used for the proposed subdivision. Paved access is also available from the terminus of Placerview Trail in existing Tract 47657.

The proposed project site is currently undeveloped and vacant, with the exception of one, wood frame single family residence and several concrete slabs that are remnants from a previous hog farm. The property is bordered on the south by a 600-foot wide Southern California Edison Easement/Ownership and is bisected by a variable-width DWP fee ownership, which extends north from Copper Hill Drive into the National Forest and local private in-holdings. Both of these easements/ownerships support electric power lines and transmission towers. A 76-inch underground aqueduct is also contained within the DWP ownership.

Elevations onsite range from a high of 1,950 feet above sea level in the central portion of the site to a low of approximately 1,400 feet above sea level near the western site boundary within the DWP Easement. Onsite relief consists of relatively flat east-west trending tributary valleys and gently ascending to very steeply ascending slopes that culminate into numerous ridgelines throughout the site.

Onsite vegetation consists of coastal sage scrub, chamise chaparral, scrub oak and coast live oak woodlands, non-native grasslands, alluvial fan sage scrub, and limited riparian habitat. One (1) valley oak occurs onsite. The majority of the site is recovering from an October 2001 wildfire. Over 4,700 oak trees, mostly small scrub oaks, occur onsite. Only 141 of the oak trees that survived the fire are ordinance size and are protected under County ordinance. Common reptiles, birds, and mammals such as brush rabbit, ground squirrel, and coyotes utilize the site.

The project site is surrounded on the south and west sides by proposed, existing, and currently under construction single-family residential developments. Existing and under construction Tract 46908 borders the western site boundary. The 600-foot wide Southern California Edison Easement, as well as proposed Tract 43589 and existing Tract 47657, border the southern site boundary. A dog/cat kennel and Blue Cloud Movie Ranch are currently east of the site off of Blue Cloud Road. The northerly site boundary abuts the Angeles National Forest boundary and the Veluzat Movie Ranch site.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project involves the subdivision of the 452.81-acre site into 479 single-family residential lots, an elementary school lot on approximately 13.90 acres, an active public park site on approximately 8.60 acres, four mini private park sites on a total of approximately 2.20 acres, one water tank lot, street lots, and seven (7) open space lots totaling approximately 268.10 acres. Residential lots would occupy approximately 118.60 acres of the site. Public streets would occupy approximately 36.10 acres of the site. The water tank lot would occupy approximately 5.31 acres to accommodate two one-million gallon water tanks. Lots would range in size from a minimum of 5,479 square feet to over 39,000 square feet. The average lot size would be approximately 10,350 square feet, and average pad size would be approximately 7,650 square feet.

Proposed primary access to the subdivision requires filling and bank stabilization along the southwesterly portions of the Haskell Canyon wash. A bridge crossing is proposed for east-west access across Haskell Canyon Wash within the development. This primary access road will also cross through the Department of Water and Power (DWP) ownership that bisects the project site. An off-site secondary access is proposed as an extension of Ranchview Terrace within Tract 47657. Total grading for the proposed project site is anticipated to be approximately 5 million cubic yards of cut and fill, which will be balanced onsite.

## ENTITLEMENT REQUIREMENTS & DISCRETIONARY APPROVALS

The development of the project as proposed requires the following approval:

- (1) Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 47760: to subdivide the subject property into 479 single-family residential lots, an elementary school lot on approximately 13.90 acres, an active public park site on approximately 8.60 acres, four private park sites on a total of approximately 2.20 acres, one water tank lot, street lots, and seven (7) open space lots totaling approximately 268.10 acres
- (2) Conditional Use Permit No. 03-254: for Density-Controlled development and grading in a Hillside Management Area and development within proposed RPD zones.
- (3) Zone Change No. 03-254: from A-2-1 and A-2-2 to RPD-1-5,500U, RPD-1-6,500U, RPD-1-7,500U, and Open Space.
- (4) General Plan Amendment No. 03-254: from Non-Urban (R) to Low Density Residential (1).
- (5) Local Plan Amendment No. 03-254: from Nonurban 2 (N2), Hillside Management (HM), and Floodway/Floodplain (W) to Urban 1 (U1) in Santa Clarita Valley Areawide General Plan.
- (5) Oak Tree Permit No. 03-254: to remove approximately 51 and encroach upon 15 other ordinance-sized oak trees.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES TO BE ANALYZED IN EIR

Upon review of the entitlement applications and completion of an Initial Study (attached), the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning (DRP) has determined that an EIR is required to address the potential impacts associated with the proposed development. Therefore, the environmental issues to be addressed in the Meadow Peak Project EIR shall include the following:

- (1). Geotechnical** - The project site is characterized by moderate to rugged, hilly terrain and is located northwest of the western San Gabriel Mountains in Southern California's Transverse Ranges Geomorphic Province. No major or active faults are located onsite. However, given the presence of regional faults, there is some potential for ground shaking due to local seismic activity. Although the site contains no major or active landslides on the site, there is potential for high slope instability in the hillside areas. Alluvial soils are located in the main drainage channel. Grading, including areas of Hillside Management, is estimated at 5.5 million cubic yards to be balanced on-site.
- (2). Flood Hazard** - The site could be prone to flood hazard, erosion and debris deposition from storm run-off. The proposed project site's existing natural drainages are part of the Haskell Canyon Wash, an intermittent USGS "blueline" stream course. An additional USGS "blueline" stream course is located on the eastern portion of the property and drains to the south, towards pending Tract 43589. Several other ephemeral tributary drainage courses also occur onsite.
- (3). Fire Hazard** - The proposed project site is located in Fire Zone 4, or "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone." The general area is characterized by coastal sage scrub, chamise chaparral, Tucker's, valley and coast live oaks, non-native grasslands, alluvial fan sage scrub, and riparian habitat. The availability of fuel (vegetation) combined with the semi-arid Mediterranean climatic conditions (long, hot summers and short, cool winters) create ideal conditions for brush fires. Santa Ana winds and periodic drought situations add to the potential for wild land fires. The proposed project would bring additional

residents to the area under the jurisdiction of County of Los Angeles Fire Department. The applicant proposes annexation to the Santa Clarita Water Company from the Newhall County Water District with fire protection provided with water from proposed infrastructure improvements on-site. Water tank and fire flow requirements will have to be addressed. The project site is approximately 4.5 miles from the nearest fire station, Fire Station No. 111, which is located at 26829 Seco Canyon Road in Saugus. Two means of access would be available to the site, along with the potential for additional emergency access using the DWP ownership area roads.

**(4). Noise** – Implementation of the proposed project would result in grading and construction activities on-site. Grading is anticipated to occur in two phases of approximately six months each. Build-out of utilities, streets, the park, the school pad, and the residential units will also take place in two phases over approximately six years. Noise associated with these activities could have potential impacts to nearby residents.

**(5) Water Quality** - The proposed project will convert currently undeveloped natural land to urban uses. Storm water runoff quality may be impacted by grading and construction activities, as well as the increase in impervious surfaces associated with residential development (i.e., streets, sidewalks, driveways, and buildings). Standard NPDES & SUSMP plans will be required.

**(6). Air Quality** - Mobile emissions generated from site preparation, construction and project operations may have local impacts. Stationary emissions generated by the consumption of natural gas and electricity during the life of the project may have incremental cumulative impacts on ambient air quality.

**(7). Biological Resources** - Onsite vegetation is characterized by fire-recovering coastal sage scrub, chamise chaparral, oaks, non-native grasslands, alluvial fan sage scrub, and limited riparian habitat. Over 4,700 individual oak trees, consisting mostly of scrub oaks (*Quercus john-tuckeri* and several scrub oak hybrids), with a few Coast Live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*), and one (1) Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*). 141 of these specimens are ordinance-size. Common mammals such as brush rabbit, ground squirrel, coyotes, birds, and reptiles were noted on the site. Focused surveys will be performed as part of the biological survey for sensitive species such as gnatcatcher and various amphibians and reptiles. Potential impacts associated with development of the proposed project include direct and indirect impacts on biotic resources. Direct impacts would include loss of natural habitat associated with the build-out of the development. Indirect impacts are associated with the possibility of increased human and domestic animal activity in the remaining natural areas.

**(8). Cultural Resources** - The project site is located in an area that contains known archaeological resources and contains features (drainage courses, oaks, ridgelines) that indicate a potential for archaeological sensitivity. Potential impacts associated with development onsite include direct and indirect impacts on possible archaeological resources. Direct impacts would include ground-disturbing activities associated with the construction phases of development, primarily from grading of roads and pads. Indirect impacts are associated with the increase in human activity and possible disturbance of potential artifacts by vandalism, collection, erosion, soil compaction, and foot or vehicular traffic.

**(9). Visual Qualities** - The grading and build-out of the project has the potential to substantially alter the current view shed from the surrounding residential developments, the National Forest, and the two local movie filming "ranches". Currently, the project site is characterized by Haskell Canyon wash and its tributaries that are separated by moderate to steep ridgelines and intervening topography, and a variety of vegetation types. Alteration of the site from undeveloped open-space to residential uses will contribute to the changing visual character of the area from rural to suburban.

**(10). Traffic and Circulation** - Regional access to the project site is from the I-5 Freeway and the Antelope Valley Freeway (SR14). Main access to the site would be provided from Copper Hill Drive via connections to Placervine Trail and proposed "D" Street in pending V.T.T.M. 43589 to the south of the site. Bouquet Canyon Road and Copper Hill Drive will assist in local traffic circulation. Circulation within the development would be via a curvilinear street pattern with two means of access that will connect via a bridge crossing over Haskell Canyon wash. The addition of 479 residential units, the approximately 700-student school, and the public park will lead to potential increases in traffic on local roadways that could impact the overall circulation patterns of the area.

**(11). Sewage Disposal** - The proposed project would require annexation into Districts No. 26 & No. 32 within the County of Los Angeles Sanitation Districts. The planned expansion of Sanitary Districts No. 26 & No. 32 is expected to be completed in 2010. Current Development Monitoring System (DMS) information indicates that sewage disposal for the proposed project would create no significant impact on the present facilities. However, the proposed project may have cumulative impacts and may require improvements to the local off-site sewer system.

**(12). School** - The proposed development would be served by the Saugus Union School District (grades K-6) and the William S. Hart Union High School District (grades 7-12). The project would add 479 single-family residential dwelling units to the jurisdiction of these districts. The project includes an elementary school site that would be dedicated to the Saugus Union School District for a school of approximately 700 students. Students generated by the proposed project may have a significant impact on the schools in the vicinity.

**(13). Sheriff Services** - The proposed project site is located in the unincorporated area of the Santa Clarita Valley of Los Angeles County and under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The project site is approximately seven miles from the closest Sheriff Station. The project would add residences, an active-use public park site, private park sites, and an elementary school site to the responsibility of the sheriff's department. Response times may not be within the desired limits and the officer to population ratio may be impacted.

**(14). Solid Waste Disposal**- The Santa Clarita Valley is primarily served by the Chiquita Canyon and Sunshine Canyon (North Valley) Landfills. Both are Class III, non-hazardous landfills. The proposed project would generate additional solid waste which may incrementally impact the long-term capacity of those landfills.

**(15). Library Services** - Library services for the project would be provided by the County of Los Angeles Public Library system. The project site is located in Library Planning Area No. 1. The addition of 479 single family units could have potentially significant impacts on library services in the area by increasing demand for library services in both library materials and square footage.

**(16). Environmental Safety** - The proposed project site is bisected by a 330-foot wide Department of Water and Power fee ownership corridor. In addition, a 600-foot wide Southern California Edison Easement abuts the property to the south. Power lines and numerous electric transmission towers are present within these corridors. The project design proposes development adjacent to this corridor. The potential hazard from the electromagnetic field associated with this corridor will be discussed in the EIR, along with analysis of the oil wells located off-site, but within 500 feet of the property.

**(16). Water Supply & Infrastructure** - The proposed project would add 479 single-family residential residences, an elementary school site, parks, irrigated slopes and parkways to the jurisdiction of the local water purveyor. The project is proposing annexation to the Santa Clarita Water Company and de-

annexation from the Newhall County Water District in order to receive water from the Santa Clarita Water Company via proposed on-site infrastructure improvements. Water tank and infrastructure requirements as well as the reliability of the water supply under existing and proposed water suppliers will be addressed.

**(17). Population/Housing/Employment/Recreation** - The proposed project would add 479 single family residences to the local housing stock. Potential impacts associated with the increase in housing include the possible need for new or expanded recreational facilities for future residents and the potential for an imbalance in the local job/housing ratio. The project will provide an approximately 8.6 -acre active-use public park site, four private/H.O.A recreation lots, and a network of designated open space and trails to connect the parks to the existing dirt roads and walkways that currently crisscross the site and the DWP easement.

**(18). Land Use** – the proposed project will require a Zone Change, General Plan Amendment, a Local Plan Amendment and a Conditional Use Permit to allow for the density, the clustering of lots, the change in zoning, and the grading in hillside management areas. Land use consistency analysis will be provided in the EIR.

## SCOPING MEETING

To assist in local participation, a Scoping Meeting will be held to present the proposed project and to solicit suggestions from the public and responsible agencies on the content of the Draft EIR. The Scoping Meeting will be held at Mountain View School located at 22201 Cypress Place in Saugus on **Tuesday, July 20, 2004** from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

## NOTICE OF PREPARATION REVIEW AND COMMENTS

The Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning is soliciting input concerning the scope of the EIR for the proposed project. To facilitate your review, the following materials are attached in additional to the above descriptions:

- ξ Los Angeles County Initial Study
- ξ Vicinity Map
- ξ 200' – scale V.T.T.M. 47760
- ξ 500' – Radius Land Use Map

The review period for the Notice of Preparation will be from **July 6 to August 4, 2004 (30 days)**. Copies of the NOP are available for review at Canyon Country Library located at 18601 Soledad Canyon Road, Santa Clarita, CA 91351; Valencia County Library at 23743 West Valencia Boulevard, Santa Clarita, CA 91355; Newhall County Library at 22704 West 9th Street, Santa Clarita, CA 91321; as well as the Department of Regional Planning website [http://planning.co.la.ca.us/drp\\_agnd.html](http://planning.co.la.ca.us/drp_agnd.html). Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than **August 12, 2004**. Please direct all written comments to Dr. Hsiao-ching Chen, AICP, Impact Analysis Section, Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, 320 West Temple Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Tel: (213) 974-6461. Fax (213) 626-0434. In your written response, please include the name of a contact person in your agency.